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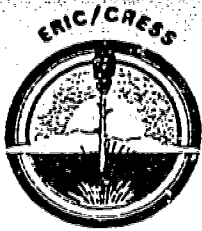
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ABSTRACT

Rural gifted programs should be developed by the consumers in rural communities and should focus on the needs and strengths of the community. The unique aspects of rural schools should be used to develop defensible community-based programs. General gifted education procedures, such as developing peer groups and psychologically secure environments, should be followed, but grouping provisions from larger urban settings are not generally appropriate. Curricula for gifted students should be modified in terms of rate of progress, control of content, and type of content. These content changes, as well as changes in instructional formats, may be accomplished or supported using modern technological means, particularly computers. When the local program requires it, teachers or students may be transported to off-campus locations to meet program goals. Support activities may be provided out of school, but these activities should be in addition to a regular education program for gifted students. (JH2)

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ERIC DIGEST

RURAL EDUCATION

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RURAL OPTIONS FOR GIFTED EDUCATION

by

Kay Sather Bull

1987

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Before technology can be adopted in a rural school, two events need to take place: (1) regular teachers in the school must understand that the technology will be used to supplement what they do rather than to supplant them; and (2) the community must accept the idea of technology-based education. Information and experience with new technology should be provided to community members in as concrete and experiential a way as possible. Without exposure, there may be resistance to "new fangled" ideas and technology.

Technology can be used in two ways: to access people or content. Ways to access people include:

- The telephone system to access mentors in an independent study hotline, contact experts through the Wide Area Telephone System (WATS), bring students in different communities together for interaction with conference calls, and interconnect students in remote/isolated areas by statewide audio teleconferences, as in Montana.
- Two-way radio to provide contact between teacher and students has been used in Australia.
- Interactive instructional television.
- Electronic mail systems using a microcomputer and modem.
- Audio or video cassette exchange to facilitate communication between student and student, teacher, or mentor.

Content may be accessed technologically by:

- Videotext, which broadcasts information to television sets and accesses databases for research, via microcomputers.
- Videodiscs which enable students to interact with a videorecording of text or pictures.
- Microcomputers which teach content with software housed on floppy discs or downloaded from a mainframe.
- Instructional television through which many colleges provide courses using either line-of-sight or satellite technology or videotape. Enrichment activities, e.g., plays, concerts, and so forth, are available off the air or for purchase from PBS and other producers (Rosberg, 1981).
- Public radio networks (state or NPR) which sponsor programs in conjunction with a teacher or mentor.
- Audio or video cassettes which can be purchased or rented through media vendors.

What Role Can Transportation Play in Rural Gifted Education?

Some procedures involving transportation include:

- Cultural enrichment: Students can be transported to cultural events in the surrounding area (e.g., theatre, concerts).
- Multidistrict mobile program: Each semester the mobile van/truck/trailer goes to a different district and provides, for example, gifted science (Barker & Muse, 1984).
- Traveling teacher: A mobile teacher comes periodically to the district to provide gifted education or to supplement what the regular teacher provides in terms of appropriate differentiated education.
- Busing: Students are bused, either periodically or daily, to a central location where gifted education is provided.
- Exchange programs: Rural gifted students trade places with urban students, a method used to expose the student to a culture not available in a rural setting.
- Foreign student exchange programs: American Field Service places select high school students with families in other countries for a summer or a year.

What are Some Out-of-School Activities for Gifted Students?

- Internships, externships and apprenticeships: Students can volunteer to work with individuals or groups in the community to gain experience in or appreciation of a type of employment or to gain specific skills.
 - Mentor programs: The student is matched with an expert (by vocation or avocation) who will facilitate and guide the student's development in an area of interest. There are as many experts in rural areas as there are in urban areas. They may, however, be expert in different things.
 - Weekend or Saturday programs: Usually provided by colleges (e.g., J. Feldhusen, Purdue University) or intermediate service units (BOCES) (Porter, 1978). Inquire at colleges and universities in your area.
 - Convocations: These multidistrict conventions explore controversial issues, e.g., nuclear power. While students try to understand and develop solutions or position statements on the problems (Strobert & Alvarez, 1982).
 - Summer school programs: Usually offered by colleges or consortia of schools to provide enrichment or education in areas not conventionally offered by the schools. A comprehensive list of summer programs is published annually by G/C/T, P.O. Box 66654, Mobile, AL, 36660 and by NAGC, 4175 Lovell Rd., Box 30, Suite 140, Circle Pines, MN, 55014).
- Most extracurricular activities should be interest based. No students should be arbitrarily assigned to one, nor should they be given grades (Porter, 1983).

Rural gifted programs should be developed by the consumers in rural communities and should focus on the needs and strengths of the community. The unique aspects of rural schools should be utilized to develop defensible community-based programs. General gifted education procedures, such as developing peer groups and psychologically secure environments, should be followed, but grouping provisions from larger urban settings are not generally appropriate. Curricula for gifted students should be modified in terms of rate of progress, control of content, and type of content. These content changes as well as changes in instructional formats, may be accomplished or supported using modern technological means, particularly computers. When the local program requires it, teachers or students may be transported to off-campus locations to meet program goals. Support activities may be provided out of school, but these activities should be in addition to a regular education program for gifted students.

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